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Art & Literature Review 1999 2000

milestone



SOUTHWESTERN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

2 volume

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Mission Statement:

Milestone is the annual art and literary review published by Southwestern Community College. The purpose of this magazine is to showcase the creative expressions of western North Carolina artists and writers.

We would also like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this magazine.

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Table of Contents

Southwestern Community College Review

* The Goin'-To-Hell Rockshop Dillsboro, North Carolina - <i>Diana L. Jurs</i>	7
* Cared For - <i>Gene Lominac</i>	8
Face of Father - <i>Michael Revere</i>	9
Face of the Tiny Wrens - <i>Michael Revere</i>	9
Face of the Illusion King - <i>Michael Revere</i>	10
Untitled - <i>Lela Stephens</i>	11
Like a Dashboard Hula Girl, I Sit - <i>Lela Stephens</i>	12
Wild Gypsy Eyes - <i>Lela Stephens</i>	13
All The Same, The Moss Stays - <i>Lela Stephens</i>	13
Oh, Evolve - <i>Courtney Hays</i>	14
Betrayal - <i>Joyce Foster</i>	15
Sunday Afternoon - <i>Joyce Foster</i>	16
Depression - <i>Martha Calloway</i>	17
Untitled - <i>Donald Brady</i>	18
My Merlin - <i>Raggedy Anne</i>	19
Nocturnalis Emittere - <i>Paula White</i>	20
Edge - <i>Russell Dowless</i>	21
Composting Crows - <i>Linda Kinnear</i>	22
Sylva in October - <i>Gene Lominac</i>	23

* Denotes Award Winner

The Glade - <i>F. Richard Holland, Jr.</i>	24
A Toast - <i>Betty Holt</i>	25
Stolen Scene - <i>Betty Holt</i>	26
The Ring - <i>Melissa Denise Powell</i>	27
Indigo Blue - <i>Kimberly A. Nichols</i>	28
* "Baba Yaga I" - <i>Kerry Meier</i>	29
* "Baba Yaga II" - <i>Kerry Meier</i>	30
Proud Mary Ann - <i>Tom Harris</i>	31
The Barber Shop - <i>Clint Hardin</i>	32
'Pandora' - <i>Rhiannon Davis</i>	33
Grieving Monk - <i>Kerry Meier</i>	34
The One That Got Away - <i>Marc Campbell</i>	35
Bathing Beauty - <i>Kerry Meier</i>	36
Jerry and Lucy - <i>Kerry Meier</i>	37
Oxymorons - <i>Various First-Year Graphic Students</i>	38
Wooden Shoe with Acorns - <i>Dolly McCompsey</i>	39
Mandala I - <i>Jeff Ruminski</i>	40
Cat and Mouse - <i>Barbara Murray</i>	41
Lightning Bug - <i>Matt Dellinger</i>	42
Arnold/Conan - <i>Dolly McCompsey</i>	43

* Denotes Award Winner

Pentax - <i>Kerry Meier</i>	44
Untitled - <i>Cynthia Strain</i>	45
Untitled - <i>Samantha Ducat-spieth</i>	46
Rita Hayworth - <i>Nakeysba Welch</i>	47
George Lucas - <i>David Kemp</i>	48
* The Homecoming - <i>Donald Brady</i>	49
* A Serial Killer Knows No Boundaries (5:30 am Camp Blanding Florida) - <i>Russell Dowless</i>	52
Historical Perspective of George Fred Hoyle - <i>Tyler Norris Gode</i>	55
Plastic - <i>Jessica Bell</i>	58

* Denotes Award Winner

The Goin'-To-Hell Rockshop

Dillsboro, North Carolina



Heading out of Dillsboro on South Four-Forty-One
"Where will you spend eternity?" (Overhead
and to your left) "Heaven or Hell?"
Orange/red flames peeling, billboard rises
amidst concrete angels, wooden tables.
Buy crystals, fossils, tiger-eyes
At the Goin'-To-Hell rockshop.

This stone from the accuser's hand
This rock where He lay His head
Rocks for houses, walls or paths
Stones from fields where the sheep were fed.

Liken me inanimate
Flesh long replaced by minerals
City of cells now turned to stone
blanched petrified and lifeless bones.

This rock stolen from the moon
This the stone that slew Goliath
A pebble washed up from the ocean
Gems in hope love lasts forever.

Precious body pressed from clay
Sinned and fractured into gravel
On this highway here today
Where tomorrow? Where tomorrow?

Diana L. Jurss



Cared For

Like an heirloom rocker
put aside with promise
to repair its legs
sometimes
you don't dare try walking.
Sitting long empty hours
years repeated
like a novel many times read
memorized
What do you think
quietly?
Idle hands
as agile as they were
in winter months at quilting frames
but eyes
that never missed a sewing sin
not keen enough for knitting.
Three generations
weekly distant
waiting for convenient holidays
others less fortunate.
You wear lace-edged housecoats;
eat well enough.
Paid professionals
clean your dirt
and you sleep warm.
They all love you.
You know they do.
They say they do.
Those times you see them.

Gené Lominac

Face of Father

The chainsaw's metal scream
rips through the late fall afternoon.
Storm downed trees bare of leaf
but rich in fuel,
being cut elbow to fingertip length
'bout a cord and a half total.

The work is honest, hard and rewarding.
Been no sun in the sky for three days
but there will be fire in the stove tonight.
Father takes a short water break
then labors 'til twilight.

Face of the Tiny Wrens

Heaven can hover
just feet above
the living trees of earth
so happy wrens
may sing for the Lord
during the sunrise
then fly down to the nest
and tend their young.

Michael Revere

Face of the Illusion King

All forms of VooDoo
are equally cursed
self-serving, self-preserving
and riddled with deceit.
Vengeance has the temperament
of ignorance
dancing with a stick
of lit dynamite.
Self worship
and visions of grandeur
are the allure
of many a false prophet.
Unhappy, malcontent people
starved for a life
filled with meaning and purpose
litter the realm of the Illusion King
like a horde of insects
deceived by the friendly blue light
of a 1,000 watt bug zapper
on a scorching August night.
The insect remains
now claim the same value
as the human remains.

In the world of Illusions
no living entity
is given a second chance.
The King of Illusion
strikes like a hungry cobra
poisoning the human psyche
with fake reality
that's real as earth, air, fire and water.

The Illusion King
can also provide the perfect answer
for every question ever asked.

The portals of entry
misguided souls pass through
from the light of living day
to the forever gray realm
of the spiritually crippled
include kind and unkind pot
LSD, meth, crack, heroine
alcohol, ecstasy, opium, coke
billions of doctor-prescribed
corporate-generated
pennies to make Uncle Sam blessed.
AMA kissed, shrink-infested pills,
the big two power sex, money
money sex power
and ill conceived religions.
Call toll free 1-800-ILLUSION
slung globally on screen and air waves
every second of Earth's present existence
and they will gladly sell you
the true meaning of your life.

Why are children killing children?
Why are grown ups killing grown ups?
Why is enough never enough?
Why do we pretend the devil
doesn't exist?

All who enter the realm
of the King of Illusion
are subject to disappear
without further notice.
"This warning will not be posted."

Michael Revere

Untitled

a picture of my soul
mounted in ebony on a plastered wall
torn down with the axe of betrayal
my golden fields of harvest wheat
aren't enough to satisfy
the hunger of a thousand starving broken hearts
little lonely people in their houses of corn husks
hoarding every memory their minds can control
feeling and tasting the past like it was yesterday
and not last year
an a-frame cottage on the hill,
holds all their joy,
confined behind red stained cheap lumber
and held down by the tape that time forgot.
no- I say to my once best friend
I won't free you from the beast you have created
not until you look it in the eye,
and see yourself staring right back.

Lela Stephens

Like a Dashboard Hula Girl, I Sit...

I can sit forever, in the company of a pleasant day
forever engulfed in the smells of now,
reflecting on the stories I have heard,
and the people I have seen.
I would stay right here forever if I could...
Like a dashboard hula girl, I sit,
and wobble on the corners of the weekend
tiptoe past the doorway of spite,
run past the doorway of aging, love and rage...
shine a light in my dusty corner,
so I can shield my blind eyes from it.
Give me an excuse to peer around the corner,
at something new.
Tomorrow I will hide behind a baseball dugout,
and sleep like a drunk until someone comes along
and kicks me out.
But for now, all I need is a story to keep me company.

Lela Stephens

Wild Gypsy Eyes

wild gypsy eyes-
stare like an oasis into my own...
rivers in her feet,
she rides upon the dawn,
powder from moth wings
is her skin,
twisting vines of ivy are her limbs
lavender is her mouth
like a thief in the twilight,
she stole everything I owned
robbed my soul blind.
I rushed to catch a glimpse of her from
my bedroom window,
but she was gone...
like the wind in her hair- I guess
one cannot tame a wild thing.

All The Same, The Moss Stays

Moss like grandfathers beard drips
from the trees over my driveway,
I will not cut it back,
it is the stuff dreams are made of.
I know it kills my tree,
like an oil spill in the parking lot
after a short rain...
maybe that is the prettiest thing I have seen all day.
maybe not-
all the same...
the moss stays,
I have other trees after that one is gone.
and if it should fall,
I shall leave it where it lands...
so that mushrooms and flowers may
grow on it,
and I will have to step over them on my way
out to the car...and it shall drive,
into a world where the prettiest thing I see all day,
are the final remains of dinosaur bones,
spilled across black pavement in the sun.

Lela Stephens

Oh, Evolve

Don't you know it,
A tail would be cool!
You could wag it,
Flaunt it,
Swing it,
Bounce on it,
Use it as a walking stick,
Beat people up with it!...
And, you could, finally,
do more than 2 things at once.
But, more exciting than a tail,
would be wings;
You could see the world;
Ah, just to behold the Earth
from way up there;
It makes my head float,
my heart, soar.
Gills, like a fish, would be fun,
But why stop at gills?!!
The tail of a fish would better equip you
For experiences in the mysterious underworld:
Life below the surface,
Full of sensational wonders and alarming dangers:
Sea numphs, starfish, dolphins, sharks, seahorses,
seals, and jellyfish...
Existing within the aquatic realm,
Which lies just below our feet...
Being land-rovers as we are now;
Mermaids are every little girl's dream--
It was one of mine.
I shall forever be fascinated by
the mythical unknown.

Courtney Hays

Betrayal

I am a spider
that consumes her mate
in succulent feast
dribbling slick juices
on spindly shanks
licking them clean
in scrumptious revenge.

I am a flower
that sweats honeyed mead
tinting the air
with ruddy scents
to lure the stinger
into a coffin
of soft petals.

Joyce Foster

Sunday Afternoon

Dark clouds hang heavy
taunting the thirsty ground
liquid pellets spatter the deck
scattering dust and yellow pollen
the clock forgets to strike
the phone lies idle in its cradle
the day is black and white
with shades of gray.

Betty died on Thursday.

I open the cover of an old album
the leatherlike binding
brittle and cracked
carefully I thumb through photographs
unleashing ghosts that bid me come
as they circle the walls in somber step
the room is black and white
with shades of gray

the danse macabre begins.

Caught in the arms of memory
I follow the lead around the floor
reflections mirrored in my heart
sweep me up in frenzied reel
until with bloodied feet
I urge the music cease
and conjure each sweet pain
back into the plastic sleeves
the images of black and white
with shades of gray

I am but a step, a beat away.

Joyce Foster

Depression

Have you ever noticed
How effortlessly
Light overtakes night
Something that darkness
Always dares us to do
As it laughs and taunts
Our powerlessness
While we try to
Wish it away - pray it away
Bargain with God to lift it
Release us from its deadly grip
Metastasized to our every cell
Already dripping with thorazine
And saturated with prozac
In a place where the illumination
Of silver, white, and gold
Are forgotten apparitions
Like we have died but are not dead
Just stranded somewhere
Where there is only blackness and
The stench of our spirits
Rotting before our eyes
As if hell itself has forced us
To stand still and witness
Our own suicides.

Martha Calloway

Untitled

The strident ringing of
the phone woke me
from a restless sleep —

Even before I lifted it from
where it nestled in its
cradle, bawling like an infant
for its two o'clock feeding,
I felt, rather than knew, it
was you —

I remember you said you thought
it cleaner to break it off by phone,
as if there is any nice way to tell
someone you no longer care.

You were patronizing; clichés
and platitudes rolled off
your tongue.

I hated you; I loved you.
I thought of a thousand ways
for you to slowly, painfully die,
but it was me that suffered each.

I still listen for the phone. Running
to put it to my ear in case
it is you, saying you want to come
back.

Right now I hate myself more
than you. It is only right.

Donald Brady

My Merlin

Wicked Queen Maab—Harbinger of fate
Stole you away from me
My heart shattered
Its slivers piercing my memory
For aeons
Until I could bear it no more
I begged my dearest God
To end my pain
The Angels of Magic
Great spirals of violet and pink
And columns of blue
Gave way
To the splendor of you.....
“My Merlin”.....
Your heart was bound up
With the shackles of love....lost
Until
That ray of light, Our soul connection
Manifested keys into my hand
And you became “My Merlin”....Again.

Nocturnalis Emittere

Night smells.

Borne on muted winds.

Damp and fungal

like root cellars expelling

spores of mold and mildew.

And, like feathers reeking

of resin and bark

from sleeping birds

weaving back and forth

on lazy limbs oscillating

stale air on breezes

bearing the essence

of deadly Belladonna.

Like earthy scents blowing

off night crawlers burrowing

beneath pungent toadstools

mingling with nocturnal fogs

creeping in off swamps

and circling over stagnant ponds

of polywogs.

Like crawdads digging, clawing,

mating; turning up marsh and bog

creating ominous smells

of night exhaling;

reaching out,

like an open grave.

Paula White

Edge

An invitation to this place from suffering is required.
Shadows dark and alluring have led me here.

My past consumes me,
like an immense void absorbing my mind.
The answer I seek is deep within my soul,
a point between consciousness and death.
My heart tries to leap from my chest with every beat,
as I realize the responsibility of my visit.

Slowly from out of the darkness
an image of a hand like my own takes me by the arm.
With its touch, my heart calms.

There is a strait that my mind can cross,
but my body cannot follow.
My destruction is my choice.

With tightly closed eyes,
a calm whisper comes from within my soul,
a silent voice since my youth:

"Stay..."

In that same moment I slowly open my eyes,
and seeing my reflection in the mirror,
I gently loosen my grip on the handle
and place the gun on the counter.

Composting Crows

I watch from the basement window
As they sit buzzard-like in the cold walnut.
They will hold their vigil
Until the old black cat sits in the yard,
Till the hungry crows bow
To the now burnt orange field.
Waiting, they keep their watch.

Beside the naked walnut the bin steams
Sending its fumes upward
As if to warm the winter skies.
One by one the crows descend
And light upon the bin's edge.
Their sleek black bodies bob
Salvaging what remains of our day.

But the cat stirs to scratch a bald ear
While the screen door plays
Frost's will of the wind.
Like giant wasps they lift off
Clutching chewed cobs, our daily bread, the good news.
Over the tall pines they go,
Nature's recyclers—composting crows.

Linda Kinnear

Sylva in October

Sylva.

Imposing
court house
looking down on you
cramped against an ugly creek
back sides of businesses
hang over
as if it were a privy.

Just there
having little to say for yourself
even if prodded.
Never having been prodded
before, not likely to be now.

Only medical personnel
and retirees
choosing to live in the vicinity
once escaped
relatives of the dead return
only for funerals
and disappear again.

Like a dingy-skinned woman
no man would marry
street lights
help make your homeliness obvious
at night.
You could be made attractive
but no one asks me how to do it.

In October
much the same
as in all other months
but with first-time leaves
falling on Main Street.

No longer
a people - watching town
on Saturdays
who sits on ill-fitting benches
under adolescent trees
watching some of the world go by
one way?

Sylva.

Gene Lominac

The Glade

A bird calls in the woods
The wind whistles above
Squirrels gather food, hiding all
A snake slithers in the leaves
On the highway, nearby
Passing occasionally, a car
The sound of a cow, needing milked
Church bells ring
Light green moss, like carpet
Covers the ground
Pine trees, marching in step
Form a line, protecting all
Trails of times long past
Meander away, leading nowhere
The smell of pine, carried on the breeze
A small cat, eyes, on the hunt
Brown, soft, the young rabbit passes
Hidden away, like a secret
The glade, My glade!

F. Richard Holland, Jr.

A Toast

To you, my women friends,
gathered here like so many Wednesday nights before
in the last five years.

Oh, how we have sat and stood a lot
in this living room and others, and
oh, how we have traveled, though at the time
it seemed that we were standing still.

Dear sisters of my soul,
there is no way I could have
come this far without you.

You have truly been here for me
as I have been for you,
as we all have been for each other.

There is no price tag for what you have given me.
There's no way I could have bought it.
There's no way to accurately measure it.

Except in freedom, hard won,
Patterns, hard pressed,
Tears, a long time in coming,
Aliveness, slowly recovered...

Here's to you, same seekers of my heart.
In these moments there is no way not to know
that we are really One.

Stolen Scene

Beneath Bahamian dance hall lights
She danced, her arms in close black nylon,
Her smiling cheeks and flashing eyes
Entranced in rhythmic spell.

As they gathered round her show
The faces watched her bend and stoop,
Glide and sail her fluid frame
Through the timelessness of song.

Some that dared moved closer still
They joined her, and she danced with them.
In and out and back and forth
She danced among the crowd.

They clapped and snapped to spur her on.
She, the Queen of jealous hearts,
She ruled their eyes, their mouths ajar,
They gaped the melodious form.

Those she touched she set on fire.
They followed her, incensed by joy.
They burned and glowed against the night,
Against Bahamian dance hall lights.

The music played to never stop.
Faster, hungrier, the mass became.
On lifted feet they crowded in
To celebrate their love.

She careened and swayed, turned and tossed,
Her head flowed through the pressing night.
She pirouetted through the door
Into the soothing arms of sea.

Betty Holt

The Ring

I know I am not perfect,
Not sexy, but strange.
I know I am silly,
Childish and mean.
Why then must you
Be so in love with me,
The interrogator to be.

Not a sweet innocent child
But, a noisy devilish whore.
A person who can no more
 make an innocent man smile,
but causes so much pain,
she should be ashamed.

Is she worth the pain,
the money, or the ring?
She hopes someone thinks so but,
All she sees is the people
whom she causes pain.

She knows she's a tease,
And don't give him what he needs.
So why is she in so much pain and wondering?

Indigo Blue

Rays of light
Secede from the union
Of blue and violet
Mingling within the void
They become murky swirls
Of tattered emotions
Forming spirals of gathering gloom
When suddenly!
Magic
From on high
BURSTS
The eerily glistening surface
Of the bubbling pool
Sheer mirth
Emerges from the depths
Tickled into frothy waves
Of light filled.....
Indigo Blue.

Kimberly A. Nichols



'Baba Yaga I' - pen and ink

Kerry Meier



'Baba Yaga II' - graphite

Kerry Meier



Proud Mary Ann - graphite

Tom Harris



Clint Hardin

The Barber Shop - *pen and ink*

Clint Hardin



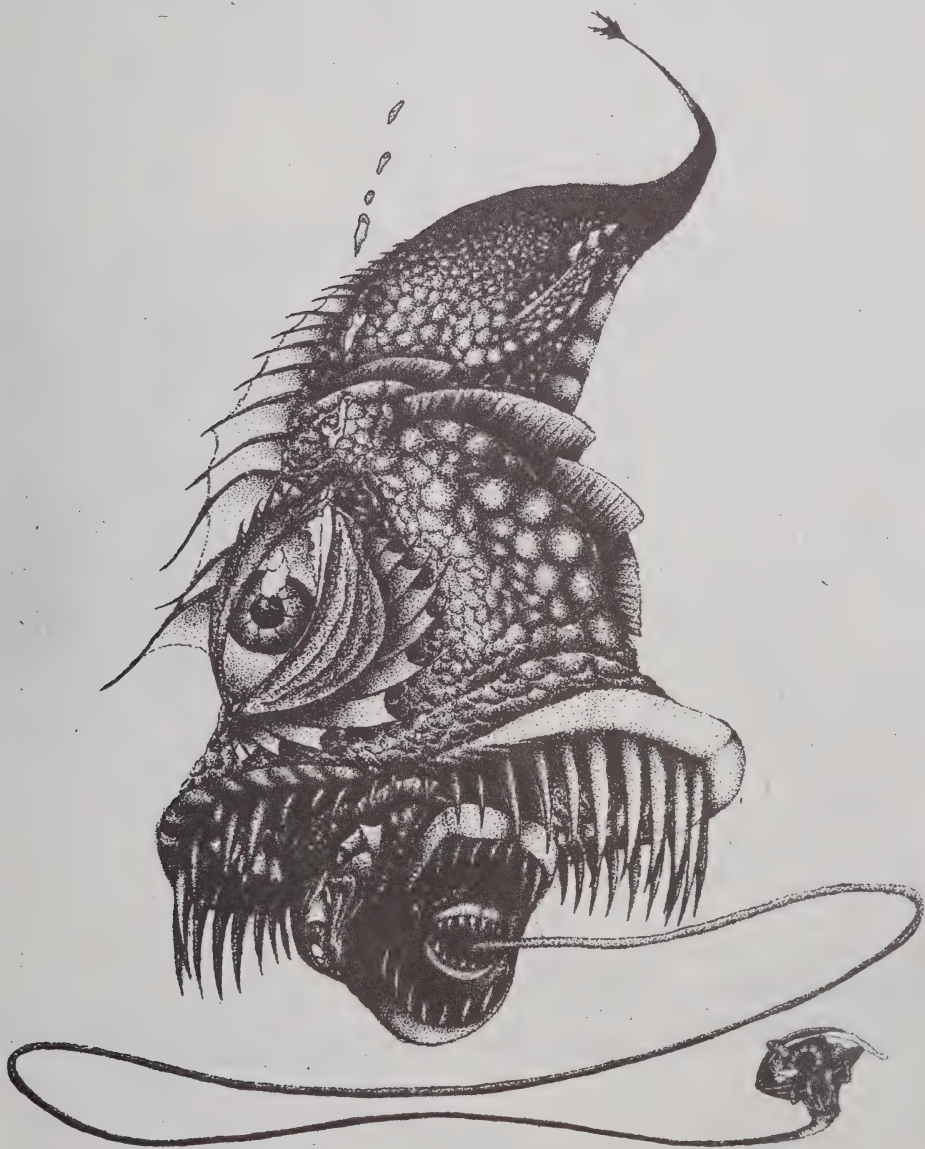
'Pandora' - charcoal

Rhiannon Davis



Grieving Monk - *woodcut*

Kerry Meier



The One That Got Away - *pen and ink*

Marc Campbell



Bathing Beauty - *woodcut*

Kerry Meier



Jerry and Lucy - *pen and ink*

Kerry Meier

Clearly **CONFUSED**

COMPUTER

JOCK

HALF

NAKED

LIVE

New
Classic

VIRTUAL
reality

HELLS *Angels*

Educated Guess

PEACE FORCE

RANDOM ORDER

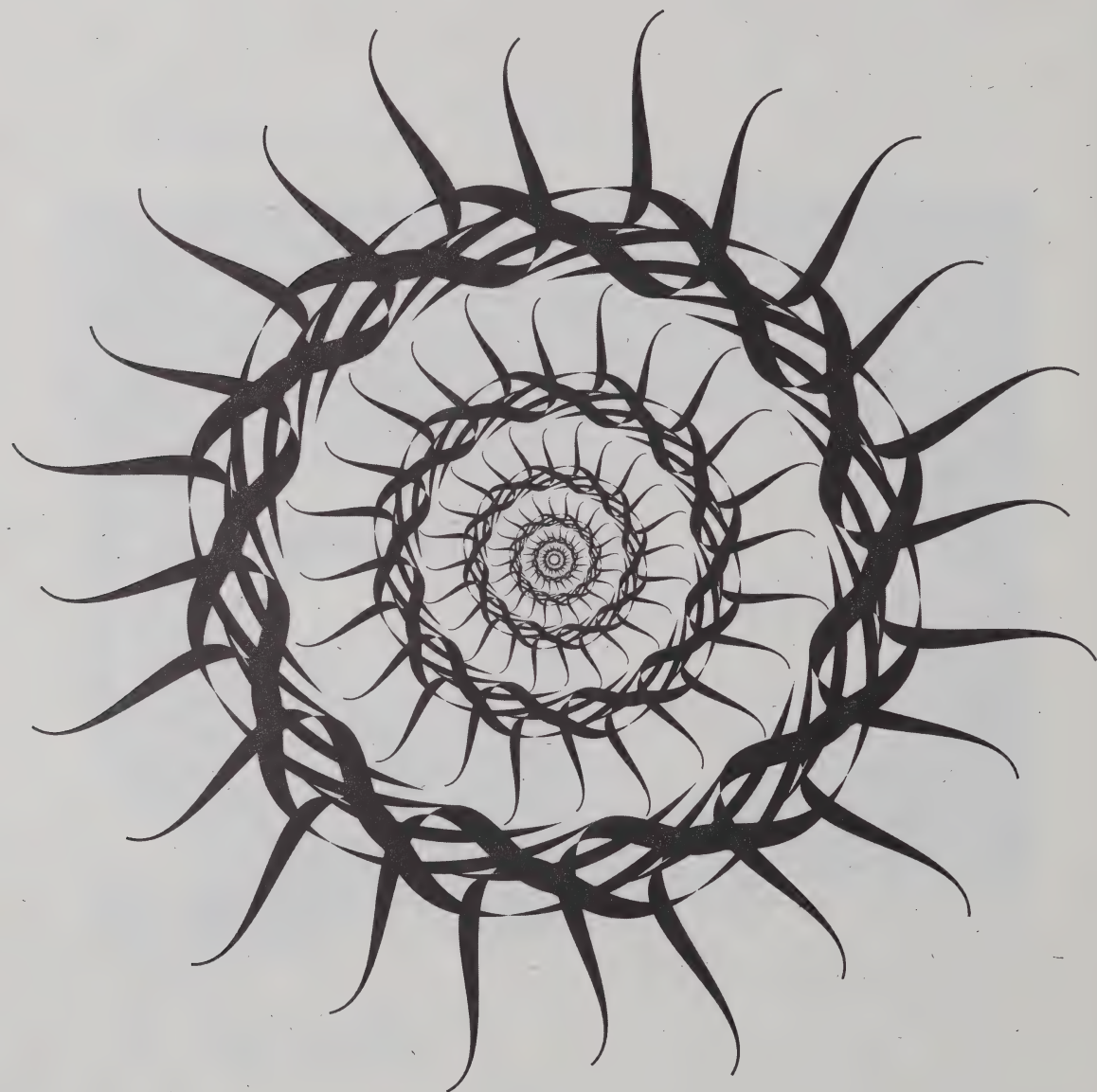
Recording

Pretty *Ugly*



Wooden Shoe with Acorns - *charcoal*

Dolly McCompsey



Mandala I - *digital file*

Jeff Ruminski



Cat and Mouse - screenprint

Barbara Murray



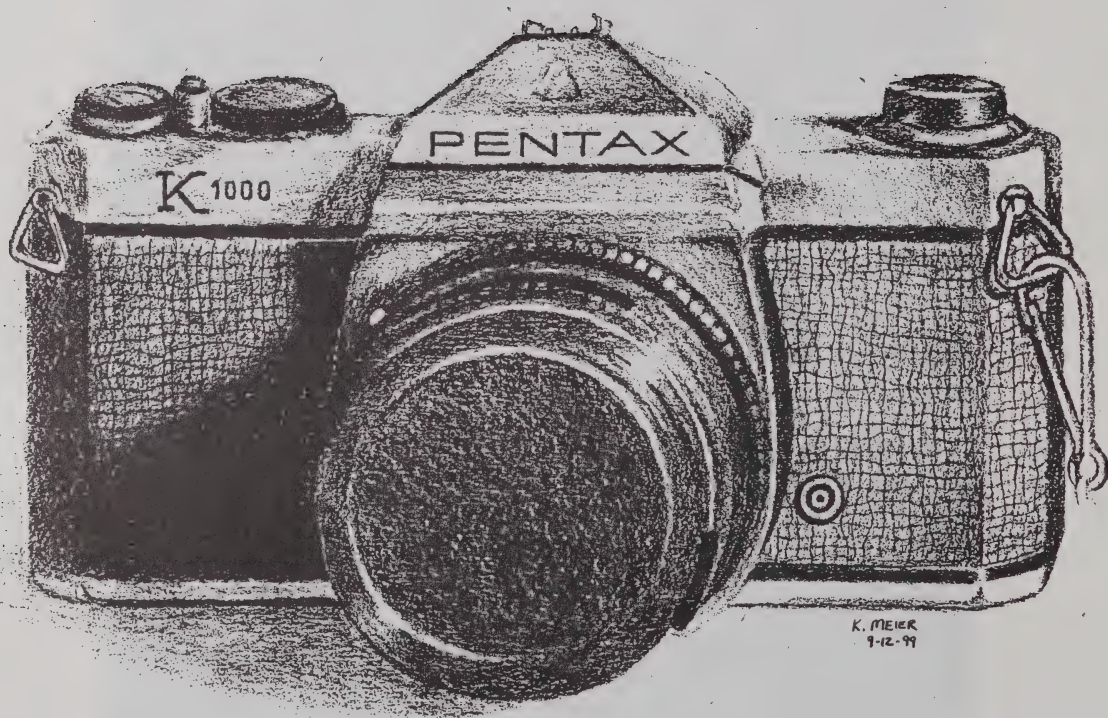
Lightning Bug - *linoleum-cut*

Matt Dellinger



Arnold/Conan - scratchboard

Dolly McCumpsey



Pentax - charcoal

Kerry Meier



Untitled - *photograph*

Cynthia Strain



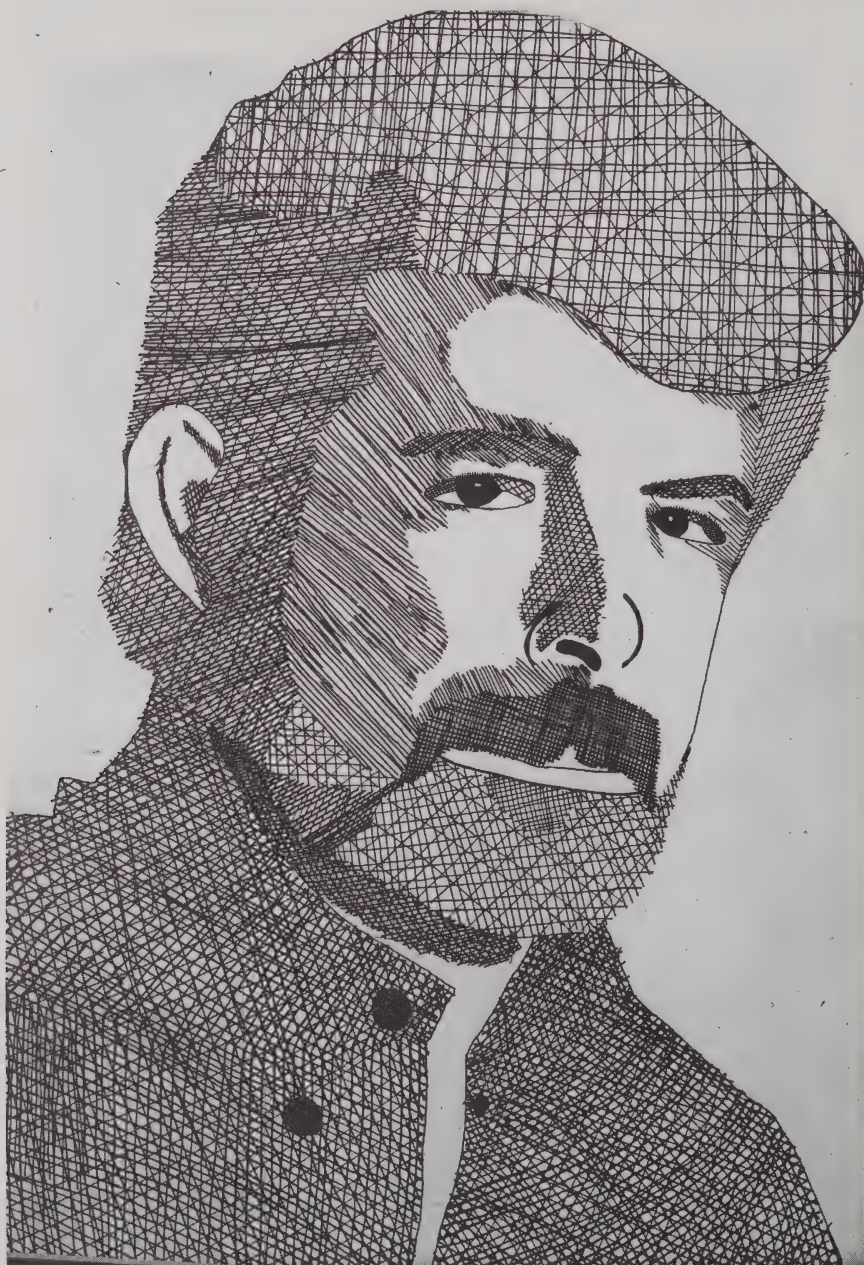
Untitled - *photograph*

Samantha Ducat-Spieth



Rita Hayworth - *pen and ink*

Nakeysha Welch



George Lucas - *pen and ink*

David Kemp

The Homecoming

Donald Brady



The slim figure holding the handmade sign rocked back and forth, buffeted by the cold March winds that came down off the nearby slopes, chilling her to the bone. Her ungloved fingers were now blue from holding up the sign that had the name of her destination printed on it with the last of her lipstick. It was her method of hitchhiking. She had changed the sign several times over the past few days. Now it had her final destination printed on it. Her mind was too numb with the cold to think about what she would say or do when she got there; she could only garner the strength to concentrate on home, on getting home, on getting warm.

The cars and trucks coming off the Interstate seemed to pick up speed as they turned onto the small farm road that went through Picket, Hillsbrough, Morton and other small towns along its route. None of the drivers seemed to notice the swaying figure with the hand-painted sign. They stared straight ahead or slightly turned their heads away so that they didn't have to acknowledge the need of a stranger. The spray from their tires was picked up by the swirling winds and, mingled with the misting rain, wet the girl from head to foot. Her only response was to grip the sign closer to her frail body.

The big Chrysler station wagon slowed, stopped and backed up to where the young girl was standing by the side of the road. The woman in the passenger's seat rolled down the window and called out to the young hitchhiker.

"We almost didn't stop for you. We were already past when I realized that you were just a girl, and that your destination was our home town. You seem familiar. Do I know you?"

The girl's only answer was a small, negative nod of her head. Her lips were far too cold to allow even a whispered answer to the question. She fumbled with the back door handle, her fingers stiff with cold.

"Helen, you're going to have to help her with the door. Just toss your gear in the floor there, young lady."

The woman reached back to help get the door open. "Look in the basket in the floor there beside your feet, dear. There should be some warm coffee left in the thermos. Not much, but perhaps enough to warm you some. William, you can just slow it down. I want to get home the same as you, but there's no need to drive so fast on a day like this." Helen turned in her seat so that she could see the young passenger and her husband William at the same time. "I'm sure I know you from some place. Do you know somebody in Morton? Are you going to be visiting?"

The young girl didn't answer. She could feel her heart beginning to beat faster, as if it wanted freedom from her body. Her shaking hand moved up to press against her eyes. The air from the rear heater vent started to work its magic. She leaned back against the seat and let her hand drop to her lap. Before Helen could ask another question, the young girl had fallen into a restless sleep.

The station wagon pulled up beside the rural mailbox that jutted out from its mounting on the post it shared with the bright yellow tube for the *Gazette*. The post stood by a gravel road leading up to a neat white farmhouse still visible in the gathering dusk, come early because of the dark rain clouds just now clearing to the east. "I'll get out here."

The woman turned again to the huddled figure in the seat behind her. "We can drive you up to the door. It's a long, cold walk from here. You can't even be sure that anyone is home. I don't see any lights. We know the Fergusons. Let us take you up to the house; then, if they aren't home, you can come home with us and call them later."

"No. Thank you, but I'll walk from here. I appreciate the ride. It made a difference." She stood for a moment watching the couple drive on down the road. She shuddered. Her clothes were still damp, even after being in the warm interior of the station wagon for the past three hours. Perhaps she should have let them drive her up to the door; but she didn't know if he would let her in, and she didn't want some outsider to be there if that occurred. She started up the gravel drive to the house, the sign still clutched in her hand, the biting wind chasing the last of the sleepy fog from her head. Her nap had been as much a surrender to the eternal tiredness she felt as it was a means to escape the never-ending questions that were a part of the last three hours.

Sara sat at the kitchen table waiting for Matthew. Night had come early. The wind outside rattled the windows. Inside, the fire in the old potbelly stove did not quite drive out the damp coldness left from the rain. She did not hear the tired step of his approach. She had

stayed up so she might put him on his guard with the news that held her captive of her thoughts. Startled, she stood up and took his arm, pulling him after her, back out the door into the night shadows.

"Mary is here." She felt, more than heard, the sound of pain that shot through his body. "Matt, be kind. You know how hard it must be for her." She reached up to push back a lock of tousled hair that lay on his forehead. "Please, be kind."

"When have I ever been unkind? But I'll not have her back in this house. Has she called or written even once? The boy has long stopped calling out her name. Why has she come? Did she say? I'll not have her back in this house."

Her fingertips touched his lips to still him. She leaned against him. She could feel the ramrod pride stiffening his body. "Quite," she said. "She'll hear you."

"When did she ever hear what I said?"

"Hush. You haven't seen her. She's so thin and worn, yet she wouldn't let me put her to bed until she had seen you, until you told her she could stay."

"Has she seen the boy?"

"No, he's over at little Harry Fenton's house to spend the night. Tomorrow is the camping trip up at the lake. Remember? He told you about it early in the week."

He moved toward the house, but she caught his arm again. He pulled loose. "I'll not have her back in this house."

"You'll not send her away! She is sick. And tired, so very tired. Be kind."

"Be kind? How many nights have you cried yourself to sleep since she left? Never mind that our life has ceased. What of the boy?"

Sara dried her hands on her apron, over and over, graceful hands with long slender fingers, coarsened now by years of toil and neglect. She

spoke again, "I can't think of him right now. I only know that she is home. There is no spirit left in her. She's so thin and tired. But she's home. I won't have you be less kind than you would be to some stray cat that showed up looking for food. She's home!"

"You don't understand, do you? She felt that rules weren't for her. She has flaunted His every rule."

Strength came to her she did not know she had. "Your rules, Matthew, not His. Your rules! She's home. That's all I know, all I care about. She's home." Sara rushed on, afraid to let him speak. "She wants to see you. She talked of plans for helping you. Rambling thoughts. She does not want to be a burden. She has your pride. You must be kind. The past is past."

The hurt in his eyes spoke louder than his words. "What did she say? Did she speak of the money or of him? Where has she been?"

"I did not ask. I only know she's home. She wants to stay. I know she wants to stay, but she won't if you don't reach out a hand. Don't turn away from her again, Matthew."

"You run on so that I wonder if you really ever understood my pain. I did not turn away from her. She turned away from me, from us."

"She's talked of you ever since she arrived, but all mixed and mingled. She mixes up time and place, like talking about little Sam Peters being with the two of you that time she fell in the pond when you took her fishing. Little Sam's folks didn't move into the cove until two summers later. She's so tired, so thin. I don't know when she's eaten last. She keeps coughing and I'm sure she has a fever; but she won't let me do for her until she has seen you, until she knows you want her to stay. You must be kind to her, meet her half way. She has your pride, you know. Matt, I won't have it any other way. She's home. I want her to stay. You must

make her stay!"

Moonlight pushed back the shadows, masking his expression. She could see the tears coursing down his cheeks. Her hand took his and squeezed.

She sat at the old oak table in the kitchen, picking at her apron, her thoughts going back across the years, and all the while wondering, "Would he bend, just a little, just this once, would he reach out?"

A small noise made her jump. She hadn't realized how tightly she was wound. She heard him coming down the hall. "Matthew?"

He stood behind her there in the small kitchen, the light from the stove reflecting the hollow emptiness in his eyes. He placed his hand on Sara's shoulder. She reached up and covered his hand with hers. She knew him well. A deep sigh escaped through her thin, tight lips. She knew, without him saying a word. She knew.



A Serial Killer Knows No Boundaries

(5:30 am Camp Blanding Florida)

Russell Dowless

The sky was just starting to change from black to reddish orange in the horizon. The helicopter was a black outline against that new day, a classic Vietnam-era Huey. The strong smell of fuel filled my nostrils as we boarded through the door of the chopper, an opening so large it was as if there were no sides to it. As I stepped in I noticed a handpainted phrase on the side that read "Death Rides A Light Horse."

While we were taking off, the rotors winding were so loud that even with my earplugs in, I still felt a small stinging in my ears. The concussion rhythms of the blades were like an imaginary hand pressing against my face. The wind caused me to shorten my breath and my bangs to beat against the top of my forehead until it felt numb.

We were airborne, the twelve of us brought here from all walks of life via the military. I knew all twelve men and felt confident going with them on this mission. My closest friend was Juan, who was sitting right beside me. We had been in many life-and-death situations before this point, so there was a lot of trust between us. With an occasional glance he confirmed that our hidden fear of flying was still intact. Seated closest to the door (which remained open on both sides while we flew) was SFC (Sergeant First Class) Hill, our ambitious leader. Behind Sergeant Hill, the

clouds were rushing by so close that you could almost touch them. He looked back at me for a moment, acknowledging the respect that was starting to build between us. Sergeant Hill was a survivor, proven when he survived the Marine barracks bombing in Beirut, Lebanon. It was there in his eyes, fortitude; he could and would find a way out of any situation given to him.

As we flew, my mind went back to yesterday evening, rehearsing the event. The mission operation order was scheduled for 1930 hours for those of us who were going to the prison. My squad was the first squad of the third platoon, Headquarters Company, 53rd Infantry Brigade. We had just come off a nine-day deployment in the field at 1630 hours; so after unloading the vehicles, storing our gear, turning our weapons in, and taking a needed shower, Juan and I found ourselves wolfing down chow just in time to make the briefing.

We approached the senior NCO (Non Commissioned Officer) barracks; I began to subconsciously check my uniform for loose buttons and hanging strings: squared away. As we entered I quickly noticed that the meeting was very informal. Good. We grabbed an unoccupied bunk, started smoking our cigarettes, and waited for the meeting to begin. It was not long before the twelve of us were seated and Sergeant Hill began to speak. It was

quick and simple: wake up at 0400, chow 0430, be at the airfield no later than 0500, and bring nothing. Everything would be provided. No wallet, no money, no knife, no ID's. Your pockets must be empty. The only things allowed were cigarettes with book matches and dog tags. The mission code named "Last Appeal" was to deploy to the State Prison in Stark, Florida for EPW (Enemy Prison of War) training. Any questions? After a few no-brainers like "Can I bring a pager?" or "Are they going to feed us?" the meeting was dismissed, and Juan and I then headed to find some ice-cold beer at the NCO Club.

Feeling the helicopter slow down and because of the way everyone was pointing, I knew we must have been approaching the prison. We landed right in the middle of the courtyard, which was about half the size of a football field, outside the front entrance of the prison. It was a lot newer than I expected with its modern white buildings and crisp fences, with its razor wire surrounding everything, with its four towers, one at each corner. I caught myself looking for any weaknesses in the perimeter, in case I needed the information for an escape. The entrance looked like the typical entrance to a courthouse, business-like and official.

This facade changed as soon as we entered through the main doors, with Sergeant Hill saying, "This is the end of the trail." He grinned. "Or so they say."

The quarters became cramped really fast. We went through three sets of locked doors, the ones behind us being re-locked, all in a twenty-foot walk.

This is where we met Lieutenant Neal, who seemed to be a nice enough guy. The LT (Lieutenant) was to be our guide and boss while we were here. Juan and I were the first searched,

so it gave us an opportunity to talk with the LT while the other guys did the routine. Juan kept going on about how he was afraid to witness an execution. He said, "When a person dies with a bad spirit, the spirit needs to find a host." I told him not to worry; he wasn't going to see an execution today.

We then were split into two-man teams and given our duty assignments. Juan and I were given November block (Death Row) and some sort of roving assignment; we were to alternate our duties periodically. As we moved deeper into the prison, my preconceived glamorized notions of what a prison really was like were peeled away with every turn. The lighting was so bad in the long and dull gray hallways that I found myself squinting. This, of course, compounded my anxiety as we dropped off two at a time for duty, and our group became smaller with each deployment.

The group finally consisted only of the LT, Sergeant Hill, Juan and myself as we approached November block. The door to the block was huge, sitting against a concrete wall with nothing around it, only the letter "N" etched above the door. Once inside, we found ourselves in a small room with a desk and a few cabinets, like a make-shift office. One other door led to where the inmates were housed. Each inmate had his own cell, probably for security reasons. There were 24 inmates on this block, all of whom had received the death penalty (for who knows what) and were awaiting execution. The LT said, "This is you for now." I answered accordingly with a nod. Sergeant Hill, replied "Home sweet home," and remained in the room also, which seemed strange to me. But I just shrugged it off.

The N-block guard was Jim, who seemed a bit out of focus with reality, probably a side effect of prison duty. "You boys want to meet

the prisoners? We got some real winners in here." I told Jim, "Sure," as we made our way through the last door. This place was the real end of the line, literally. The lighting was a little better, so I could make out my surroundings easier. Jim's list read like a Who's Who at a killer's ball.

We made our way past the cells. There had been an execution only two days prior, so it was pretty quiet. I answered many questions as we made our way past the cells, "Is the Army taking over?" or "How long will you be here?" each man asking his own questions. There was one common theme as we met each prisoner; each man's eyes told the same story: a silent cry for help wrapped in idle conversation.

Through it all Sergeant Hill remained coldly silent and without sympathy, only occasionally nodding when prompted. We came to an unoccupied cell at the end, but someone's stuff was there. I asked Jim where the prisoner was, "Dead," he replied, staring straight at Sergeant Hill. Then Jim went on to tell us that the cell had belonged to Ted Bundy, a serial killer who had been executed a few years before. Of course, we knew who Bundy was; who didn't? From talking with the LT earlier, I knew that the LT and Hill had met at Bundy's execution. The phone started ringing at Jim's desk, so he told us to just hang out and headed back up front.

Sergeant Hill waited a moment then reached out and opened the door to Bundy's cell, which was surprisingly not locked. I remained silent although I knew we were doing something we shouldn't. The cell was a 6'x9' room, and except for an unusual amount of books and magazines, it looked like a normal cell. Sergeant Hill entered first, and I followed cautiously.

Once inside, Sergeant Hill let his fingertips

slowly follow the wall. He made his way around the small cubical then stopped with his back to me. As I stood halfway in the door, a small book on top of a pile of magazines caught my eye. I took one small step farther in and reached out and picked up the book, with much care. The title was unreadable on the cover. I could only make out the author's name, James Joyce. I heard a sound and as I looked up, Sergeant Hill grabbed the book from my hands and said, "Don't touch my stuff." He pushed past me to leave the cell. Instinctively I said, "Yes... Sergeant?"

He froze for a second just outside the cell and slowly turned toward me, our eyes fixed on each other. His eyes were different this time, the same desperate look I had seen in the other prisoners. The silent cry within him spoke, "Help me."

Just then Jim came around the corner, "What the Hell is going on?" With a sinking feeling in my stomach, worse than I had ever had from flying, I knew I had a story to tell Juan.

Historical Perspective of George Fred Hoyle

Born August 2, 1911; Willets, North Carolina

Lifelong resident of Western North Carolina

Tyler Norris Goode

Many folks — especially those of us new to the region — have no idea what stories lurk inside the surrounding mountains. The four-lane, asphalt highways winding around hillsides...the power and telephone lines crisscrossing everywhere... the satellite dishes zapping information at the speed of light — these conveniences are so prevalent that they lull many of us into believing they've always existed; or, at least into not worrying what life was like prior to their emergence.

When road construction chokes our "four-laners" down to two, our tempers boil. We consider the resulting 20-mile-per-hour progress as an unacceptable hindrance. And when we're without electricity, telephone, or satellite service for more than a few hours, we are brought to our knees.

Ah, but there was a time when rugged individualism was the norm in these mountains. Many of us fail to realize that only a handful of decades separate us from those days. Even today, there are still men and women whose eyes can filter through the wooden power-line poles, asphalt roads, and copper wires. In their minds, they can still feel the bitter cold of winters without baseboard or central heat. Their fingers still sense the sore blisters that come from chopping wood — the only source of heat back then. They hear the whistle of an approaching train, knowing it is the only means of transportation

other than horses, carriages, and (gasp!) walking. They even remember a time without television.

One such set of eyeballs, ears, and memories belongs to George Fred Hoyle of Sylva. Born on August the Second, 19-and-11, Fred — as his friends call him — recently eased back into his favorite living-room chair, stared at his wood paneled wall, and shared his very own picture-show memories with me, a recent transplant to this area from Texas. Fred's eyes focused on random points in time such as:

* The first time he rode in a car:

"Well, I tell you," he begins. His thick, mountain accent would be almost indecipherable to someone not accustomed to this region's dialect. His eyes find a certain spot on the wood paneling as this particular memory grows clearer. Abruptly, he begins his story. "Best's I kin remembah, the yeah was about 19-an'-23, Ol' big Doc' Nichols had one. He 'ud driven up into tha' sticks. I was theah, my dad was theah — everyone was theah.

My dad said, 'I want you to take my boy for a ride in that car.' In those days, theah wasn't nothin' but ol' wagon roads. So we went down a road 'tween the railroad and the creek. He took me a ride in it, then he let me drive it. He was a

big ol' feller, an' he let me sit up in his lap and drive to church."

*** How average people traveled:**

"N those days, the only way to get 'round 'us by train. That and wagon were the only ways. My Daddy was a logger, so he always had a pair o' real strong cattle. He'd hook 'em to a wagon, an' off we'd go." The 87-year old eyes lose their place for a second, but then, sharper than ever, they zoom back in as he says: "But, let me tell you, the train went t'ard Murphy every morning at 9 'Clock. At 3 'Clock in the evenin', it would come back through Sylva. People rode that train to Sylva and back. That 'us the only way. Willets (which is the Scotts Creek area today) is about seven mile from Sylva... When I 'us young, there 'us only 'bout 2-1/2 miles of paved roads."

*** His father's occupation:**

"My father worked for Champion Fiber Company. He'd cut down all kind of trees. He'd make the logs no longer 'n 16-foot-long — eight-or-16 foot was the longest." Fred remembers that logging and farming were the only two ways a man could make a living in the mountains prior to World War II. "But my Daddy always made money," Fred says often. "In those days, if you didn't make it, you didn't have it — that's 'bout the best way t' put it."

*** His family's history:**

"Now, my great-granddaddy came over di-rect from Germany," Fred recalls with eyes twinkling — obviously proud of his heritage. His great-grandfather's name was Billy, who was "well-edjicated; very

well-edjicated." Billy had settled in Cleveland county. He had four boys: Joe, Nick, George (Fred's grandfather), and John. At mention of his Great-Uncle John, Fred realized he must tell another story:

*** Link to the Civil War:**

"Now, John was an ol' Civil War veteran. He 'us married to fo' diff'nt women. Soon's one'd die, he married 'nother. He 'us the only 'un o' Billy's boys I ever met. I don' 'member him too good. He walked with a pretty good limp. Anyways, after the War was over, he started walkin' through Tennessee back toward North Caroliner." Fred got sidetracked a moment, telling a story about how come Mountain Folk in Tennessee extended some good old Southern hospitality to his Great Uncle midway through his trip back to North Carolina. He then continued: "John settle down in Madison County. We went up to visit 'im when he 'us up in age, 'n he was blind. Now, his fourth wife tol' my daddy when we walked up: 'Now Joe, don' you tell him who you are.' Then she took us inside and said: 'John, you've got some comp'ny's come to see you.' He was layin' on an ol' sleeper bed. My daddy walked up to him and asked how he was getting along. John laughed and said, 'Now, you wouldn' try an' fool me, now, would you? Why, that's ol' Joe.'"

*** Life in Jackson County during the Great Depression:**

A distinct flinch, almost as though he'd been shocked by electricity — that was Fred's reaction when the Great Depression was first mentioned. "Well, now, let me tell you how that was, the Great

D'pression. When I was a boy, just 16-year-old, you could hire a good man to work for five dollah a day. When the Great D'pression stahthed, you could hire all the men you wanted fo' two dollah a day. I was makin' one dollah a day, an' I knew men who worked all day long for jist 75 cent. I mean, I worked all day — and I mean you worked hard all day — for that dollar a day."

Unwavering opinions of the politics surrounding the period find their way into Fred's recollection of those hard times. Seventy years have done nothing to erase those intense feelings about the way politicians handled the Great Depression. After 15 minutes, or so of rather harsh banter, he adds:

"I heard that there were 226,000 jobs lost, in a matter of weeks, when th' stock market crashed. But we got pretty lucky. I learned t' always plant everything you could, 'cuz you probly gon' need it."

*** World War II:**

"Now listen heah. Nineteen-and-fohty-one, I was drafted. I was 30 years old. Far's I know, I'm the only five-point vet'ran in Jackson County." (Being a five-point veteran means he went all the way from Omaha Beach to the Czechoslovakian border). "I fought alongside the Russians up theah in the North Pocket... To this day, I still wouldn't turn my back on a Russian... When I fin'ly came home, it was pretty late in the evening. I had a li'l niece; she was about 12-year-old. Heard her say: 'I see a soldier man comin'.' Hadn't seen my fam'ly in three-'n-a-half years. They started a hollerin' and a screamin'. An' oh boy, they wouldn't let me go for a long time."

In the days George Fred Hoyle was raised, Western North Carolina had little more to offer than good, honest work; good, honest folk; and every now and then — a good, down-to-earth dance for fun. Those of us who cannot remember those times may be glad we never lived in an era without instant communication, accessible transportation, and a variety of jobs to select from. But Fred will tell you: "Back them days, when a man tol' you somethin', you coul' take him at his word... People didn' meddle so much in other foke's bus'niss... People treated one 'nother good." Fred may not have grown up with modern conveniences. He may not have many photographs or any Sony videotape of the people and times he knew in his prime. But this mountain-grown man knows one pleasure that is unique in this era. On any given day — at any time of the day — George Fred Hoyle can plop down into his favorite living room chair and slip back to a time when his own eyes beheld a Civil War veteran, a time when Jackson County had no automobiles, and a lifestyle that is almost forgotten.

What a way to go!

Plastic

Jessica Bell

Lila never asked for much—she didn't want to be a bother, she said—but the great-grandbaby was due in a week, and she had run out of backing for its quilt. So when she'd asked her favorite niece, Lurlene had said, "Why, Lila, you know I'd just be happy to drive you down to the Wal-Mart." Lurlene had dropped her off at the door and gone to park the car, "Now you just take your time," she said, "and after I've been to the grocery store, I'll pick you up out front."

Six years had passed since Lila had given up her car. Since then, she had made do with what she had, and rarely had she visited the local halls of commerce. The doors of this one slid apart before she could look for the handle, disclosing a swarming vastness, a glare of fluorescent light. A lady who seemed to be the hostess handed her a cart and directed her to Piece Goods, "all the way to the back."

Lila hooked her cane on her arm and leaned against the cart as she steered it past the hanger-racks and piles and stacks of merchandise on counters and tables and shelves so high you'd need a ladder to get to the top. She wondered how in the blue-eyed world they'd hope to sell it all.

In Women's Wear she paused beside a "Super-Bargain" table, and the thought of turning up at church in purple polyester pants and a fuzzy Orlon sweater brought an impish grin to her face as she pushed on down the aisle.

She trundled her cart through Styrofoam coolers and Melamine plates, bed pillows stuffed

with Fiberfil, and molded vinyl housewares on a table that looked like walnut but had the wood grain painted on under its slippery surface.

Arriving at last in Piece Goods, Lila wandered among the bolts of Dacron blends and Polar Fleece and nylon velveteen, finally finding the cotton muslin she was searching for on the bottom of the "50%-off" table. There was a hefty fold of it; and while she got it measured, she counted out her dollar bills and decided to take the lot.

Waiting in the checkout line, she saw some clerks in Wal-Mart smocks unpacking Christmas trees. While one of them wrestled the limbs into shape, another was trying to fluff up the bristles that stuck together in wadded clumps along the wire branches. Idly, Lila wondered: whatever happened to Halloween? It was only mid-October.

Halloween had moved outside. For stacked against the front of the store were oblong blocks of some kind of shredded material topped by Day-Glo pumpkins with Trick-or-Treat buckets to match.

Lila needed a place to sit while she waited for her ride. Prodding one of the bales with her cane to satisfy herself that it was solid enough to hold her, she moved a jack-o-lantern aside and settled down to rest her bones and watch the passing shoppers. After a while she noticed a shred of something sticking to the leg of her good wool slacks. It felt warm and pliable when she plucked it off. She slit it with her fingernail and held it up to her nose.

Then she took a bite of it, spitting the splintered pieces into her handkerchief.

Lurlene, down at the end of the mall, had stowed her groceries in the trunk and now was approaching the Wal-Mart curb basking in a pious glow of charitable intentions:

"Aunt Lila's such a sweet old thing; I'd ought to take her out more. She'd be thrilled to have a chance to see all the nice, new, modern stuff you can get in the stores. Just see how she's smiling; she's having the time of her life. Next week I'll go and get her and let her look in the K-Mart." ... She reached across to open the door.

Lila stuck her head inside, excitement mixed with wonder sparkling in her eyes. She pointed over her shoulder. "Lurlene, look at what I found. It's hay. IT'S REAL HAY!"

Call for Submissions

Manuscripts for the 2000-2001 edition of the *SCC Milestone* will be accepted through Dec. 1, 2000. Each submission should include the author's name, address and phone number on every page.

Essays, local history, poetry and short stories - as well as black-and-white artwork - may be submitted. All submissions should be typed or printed.

Seven people whose manuscripts or works of art are selected for publication will also receive cash awards:

- A. First and second prize in poetry;
- B. First and second prize in prose;
- C. First and second prize in artwork.

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